Clint Enns

Confessions from the Deep Web

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Confessions from the Deep Web

Pictures and Stories

for Nicholas

Introduction

This short artist book is compiled from a series of fragmented ideas and thoughts that were developed while wandering the unmarked territory beyond the boundaries of Google-able content, a space known as the deep web. Beyond the surface web lies the internet of things and websites that are reminiscent of Bulletin Board Systems [BBS] and Web 1.0. One of the promises of the deep web is anonymity which allows those who use it a total freedom of expression and the ability to explore one's innermost desires and political beliefs without fear of repercussion. The contents of this book are confessional, although not necessarily autobiographical, and include personal reflections, observations, photographs, and images found while rummaging through the deep web.

no name® / sans nom®

We are returning your processed digital media / film negatives without certain prints. We have established guidelines in our Photo Centre prohibiting us from printing those images which we classified as unsuitable.

We regret any inconvenience this may have caused you and trust you will understand our position.

WMPL-13EF Rev 05/

Corporate Censorship [not everything will appear on the internet]

The Urge to Confess

The only truly private space one inhabits exists within the grey matter found between the ears, the space in which, we imagine, thought originates. Within its boundaries lies our secrets, our sins, our dreams, and our fantasies. As such, this real estate is highly sought after.

The thoughts which we ostensibly prefer to keep hidden, but sometimes, often strategically, let slip, reveal themselves in the form of a confession. The act of confession lies somewhere between private and public space. It has often been argued that confessing has therapeutic value, but the confessional has also played a role in systems of societal control and it has been regarded as one of the privileged forms of truth. As argued by Foucault, the confession has became one of the primary techniques for producing truth in the West and through the act of confession, a form of self-surveillance is enacted, a recursive system of societal control which extends Bentham's conceptualization of the panopticon.

Homepage for *Insecam* from 2014:

> Welcome to *Insecam* project, a site of online insecure cameras. The purpose of the site is to show the importance of settings and changing the security settings on internet cameras. We hope that you will see the importance of taking steps to activate your camera's password. Thank you for visiting.

"A Creepy Website Is Streaming From 73,000 Private Security Cameras" - *Gizmodo* headline from November 6, 2014.

Homepage for *Insecam* from 2019:

> Welcome to *Insecam* project, the world biggest directory of online surveillance security cameras. Select a country to watch live street, traffic, parking, office, road, beach, earth online webcams. The following actions were made to *Insecam* for the protection of individual privacy:
>
> - Only filtered cameras are available now. This way none of the cameras on *Insecam* invade anybody's private life.
> - Any private or unethical camera will be removed upon complaint.
> - If you do not want to contact us, you can still remove your camera by changing its password.
>
> Thank you for visiting *Insecam* online directory.

Your Right to Privacy™

The deep web is a part of the internet that exists on an encrypted network and isn't indexed by traditional search engines. The majority of the sites on the deep web hide their identity using the TOR encryption tool and, as such, can only be accessed using an anonymizing browser called TOR [The Onion Router]. By using the TOR browser, users are, for the most part, anonymous on the deep web. This is one of the major reasons the deep web feels like a return to the early days of the internet, the internet before every application required access to your iPhone or one of your social media accounts. In other words, the internet was considered a private space, a space in which you were seemingly in control of your anonymity.

The experience of accessing the deep web is similar to that of accessing early BBS or Web 1.0; it requires some basic knowledge about computers and is unpredictable, unreliable, and often annoyingly slow. Even the best deep web search engines return repetitive and irrelevant results, and better results are usually obtained by consulting link lists and forums; however, like Web 1.0, following recommended links often results in a tiresome number of timed-out connections and 404 errors.

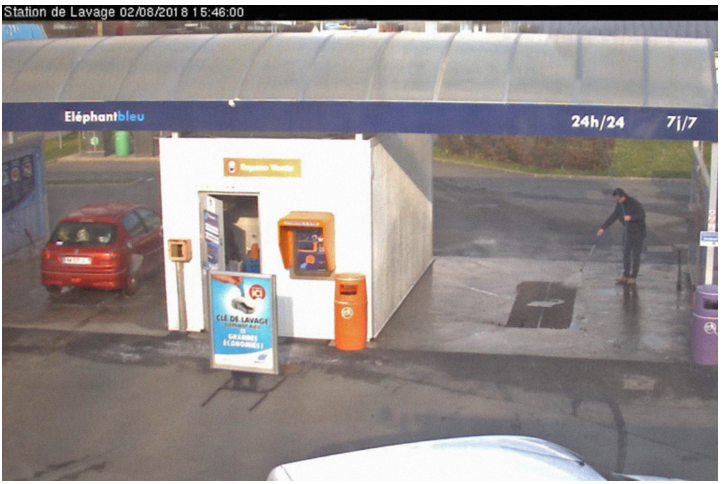
At this point in time, the surface web is considered a public space, a space in which anything you share, whether in a forum or in a private chat, might be made available to the general public or traced back to you. With social media, we live in public, and, for most intents and purposes, content shared on the internet should be treated as though it will exist forever. Without using an anonymizing browser, a user is susceptible to "traffic analysis," a common form of network surveillance which can track your internet activity even if the connection itself is encrypted. Those who use the internet are under digital surveillance and as many have argued, the computer has replaced the confession as an instrument of discipline and control.

Beyond the surface web also lies the internet of things, the network of devices that use the internet to interact and exchange data. Through the internet, these devices can be remotely monitored and controlled. Security cameras are one of the objects that can be searched for on the internet of things. Like the confessional, these camera feeds exist in a space between private and public.

Storage Room #1

Storage Room #2

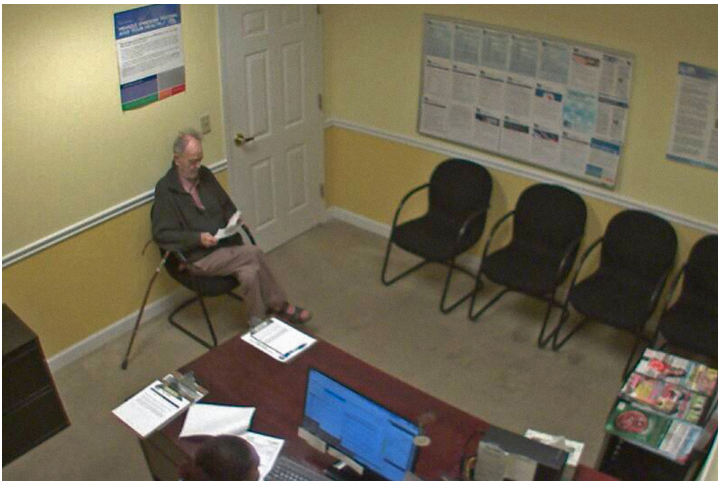
Semi-Trailer Truck in Snow



Station de Lavage [02/08/2018 15:46:00]

*Moooooh [26/06/2011 *21:42:00]*

Spa [2018-04-25 09:49:15]



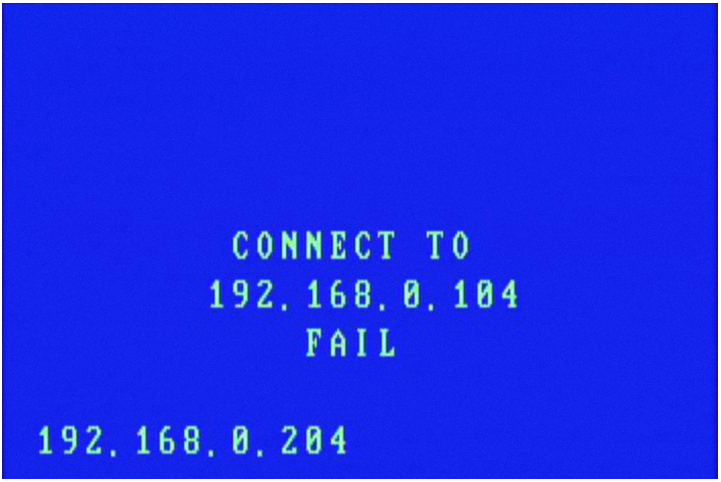
Waiting Room

Day Care at Night

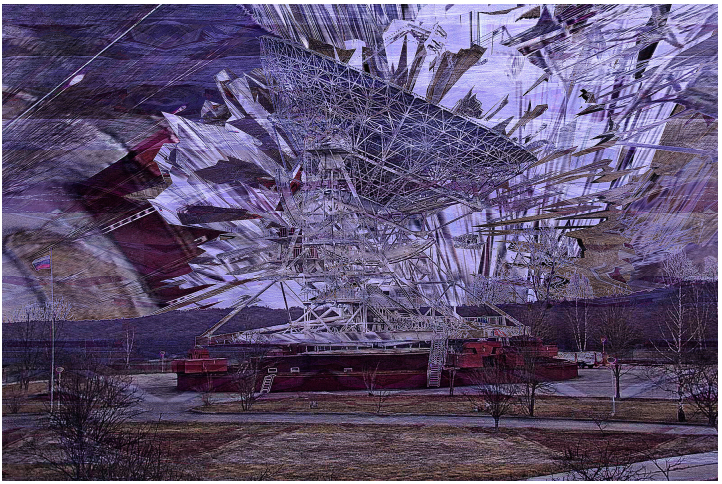
Computer Room

Spider Cam [Sobornaya pl. 2018-02-14 16:58:04]

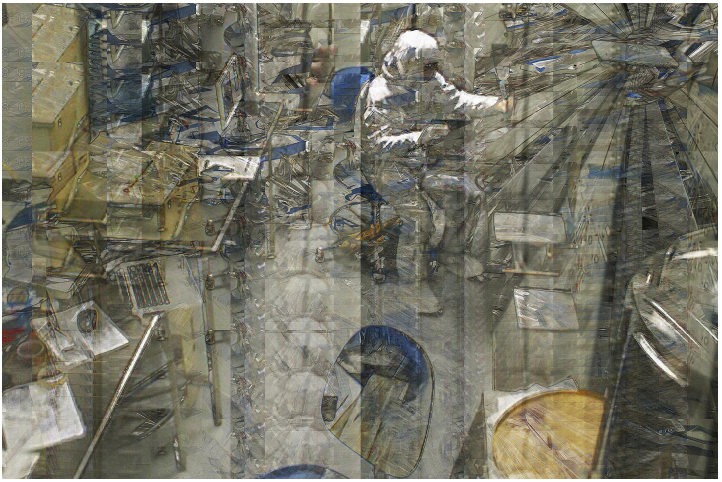
Webcams



Security Breach [192.168.0.104]



Satellite



Lab

Pool

Sting Rays

Chick

Beach #1

Beach #2

Deer Cam

I
bits, bytes and data
dripped from your lips

the Stasi collected each letter
{this time not choking to death on it}
metadata and content

filing it all away in a bunker

II
They made many press releases, saying,
Don't worry, it's not you we're after,
but kept collecting:
words, letters,
each gnostic meaning.
Nothing was safe.

{The truth will come out,
and you can't stop it.}

Some things I never said out loud
and only whispered into text
uttering true interpretations secretly.
Laid bare in banners and analysts eyes,
nothing was sacred
to humans made calculators.

- Vance Osterhout, *Snowfall I & II*
From *The Torist*, Vol. 1
http://toristinkirir4xj.onion/

Castration Anxiety in the Age of Handheld Devices

I must confess that I began searching the deep web in order to hunt down sites that featured lists of unsanctioned, uncurated, uncensored and unsecured security cameras. In psychoanalytic theory, this can be seen as a failure to accept castration anxiety (resulting in a failure to identify with my father); however, in reality, I just wanted to immerse myself in the universe of the omnipresent camera, long lists of cameras dedicated to documenting the laundromats, parking lots, and freeways of the world.

The cameras I obsessed over were often quite mundane and watching them would reassure me that, at least in the majority of places in the world, nothing interesting was happening. The traffic cameras did not reveal any car chases, the office cameras did not reveal extramarital affairs, and the laundromat cameras did not reveal any people trying to cover up fresh murders by washing the blood away. A reminder that life isn't like the movies, unless, of course, you are referring to Warhol's silent-era films, but even those required a skeleton crew.

ATTN: <your_email>
SUBJECT: THIS IS NOT A JOKE - I AM DEAD SERIOUS

Hi perv,
The last time you visited a p0rnographic website with teens, you downloaded and installed software I developed. My program has turned on your camera and recorded the process of your masturbation. My software has also downloaded all your email contact lists and a list of your friends on Facebook. I have both the “<your_name>.mp4” with your masturbation as well as a file with all your contacts on my hard drive. You are very perverted! If you want me to delete both the files and keep the secret, you must send me Bitcoin payment. I give you 72 hours for payment.

You can visit police but nobody will help you. I know what I am doing. I don't live in your country and I know how to stay anonymous. Don't try to deceive me - I will know it immediately - my spyware is recording all the websites you visit and all keys you press. If you do - I will send this ugly recording to everyone you know, including your family. Don't cheat me! Don't forget the shame and if you ignore this message your life will be ruined. I am waiting for your Bitcoin payment. I will consider giving you another 48 hours before I release the vid.

– Anonymous Hacker

Welcome to My Homepage

Despite the ubiquitous nature of surveillance cameras, it isn't the threat of the state watching that domesticates us, it is our own cameras that have become instruments of social control. Like the confession, it is our web presence that is self-regulating. The camera no longer simply has the social function of preserving our past, it now regulates our present ensuring that we do not deviate too far from social norms. After all, an image, once online, lasts forever.

The image once was a reassurance that we would last forever – it was a death mask promising eternal life. Now that image has transformed into a threat. An inappropriate image might spread – it might go viral. Moreover, it seems Descartes' foundational claim has transformed in the digital age: “I think, therefore I am” has mutated into “I post, therefore I exist.” Does a person really exist if they aren't Google-able?

While the photographic image once offered the assurance of eternal life, it is now our web presence that secures this promise. As such, many people try to regulate their digital footprint; however, this is not always possible and viruses are often difficult to control.

The following images were obtained while rummaging through the “digitally abandoned,” online photographic archives of users who haven't posted in years.

Wasting Time On The Internet [06/16/2004]

Nicholas

Dick Pic

Orange Body Suit

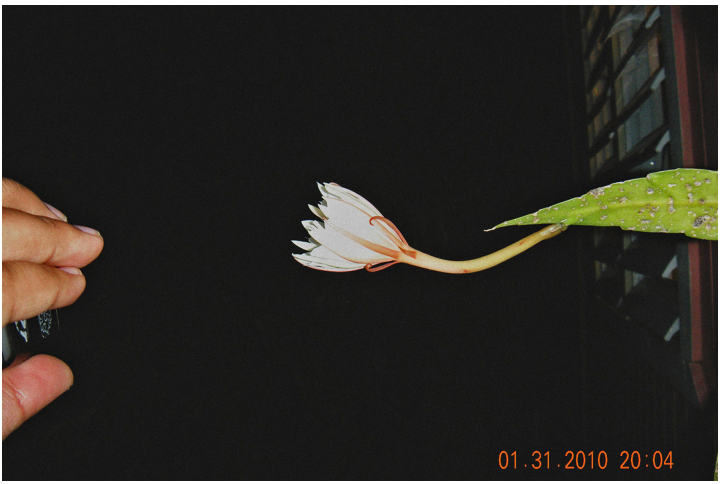
Brown Paper Mask

Self-Replicating Viral Image

Sea [12.16.2000 13:02]

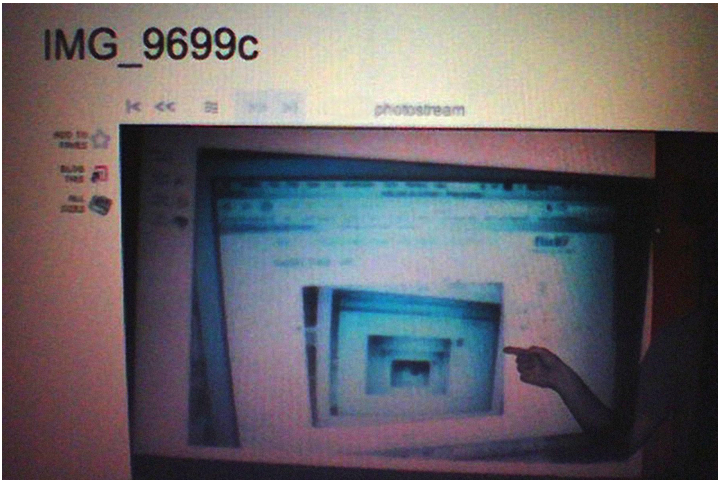
Deer [2003/03/11 05:58:27]

Moon [30/06/2004]



Reaching Out To Nature [01.31.2010 20:04]

Maze



Reaching Out To Technology [IMG_9699c]

In loving memory of Nicholas
chicks dig Scars

No Salvation on the Deep Web

I left the deep web unsatisfied, but with a newfound nostalgia for an era when the internet was not linked to every aspect of my daily life. As I had previously suspected, most of the writing about the deep web is sensationalized, and many of the sites were designed to separate gullible people from their money. For instance, it is not an enigma as to why the mystery box you purchased on the deep web will never appear in your mailbox, and it wasn't “lost” or confiscated by customs.

The desire for anonymity is, perhaps, a yearning to simply escape the ubiquitous algorithms that track every online movement in an attempt to better understand our behaviour and our consumer impulses. The truly private moments that once only existed in the mind's eye are often revealed through every click one makes and every search one performs. The deep web, at the very least, provides a space for the fantasy of anonymity; however, even in the early days of the BBS, the system operators [sysops] that ran them constantly monitored everything their users did, often watching in real-time.

As Warhol famously declared: “In the future, everyone will be world-famous for 15 minutes.” Banksy responded to this

dictum in an artwork, a pink television which features text spray-painted on the screen reading: “In the future, everyone will be anonymous for 15 minutes.” In the 80s, Warhol admitted that he never actually made this declaration; however, by that point, it was already too associated with him to disavow. The myth had transformed into reality.

While surfing the deep web, I felt empowered through anonymity. Hiding behind a VPN [Virtual Private Network] and TOR allowed me to feel invisible and ensured that I would be immune from annoying personalized ads trying to sell me surveillance systems after I had performed my search. Despite this, my 15 minutes of anonymity were quickly used up waiting for timed-out connections and 404 errors.

In the digital utopia, there will be a TOR relay set up on every computer making the TOR network faster, more secure, and beyond government and corporate censorship. While living in public has its perks, ideally a person should be able to control their own level of anonymity. If I wanted my neighbours to see what I did at night, I would leave my blinds open, install an insecure security camera in my room, or remove the tape from my computer camera. But, alas, I am a voyeur of the mundane, and not, unfortunately, a mundane exhibitionist.